

E.L. Smith & Company, Sixteen-sided Granite Shed
Burnham Street
Barre
Washington County
Vermont

HAER No. VT-8

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

E.L. SMITH & COMPANY,
SIXTEEN-SIDED GRANITE SHED

HAER No. VT-8

Location: Burnham Street, Barre, Washington County, Vermont

Present Owner and Occupant: Lucien Savard, Savard Granite Company, Inc.

Present Use: Granite-cutting shed.

Significance: This structure is an unusual example of a sixteen-sided granite cutting shed. No other examples are known. It is representative of the granite industry in Vermont, which is an important part of that state's economy.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of construction: 1889.
2. Original and subsequent owners: 1889-1908, E.L. Smith & Company; 1909-1914, Smith Brothers Granite Company; 1915-1924, Joseph Sanguinetti; 1924-1940, Sanguinetti Brothers (February 1940, Receivership); 1940-1945, Barre Trust Company; 1945-1961, Willard Reed; 1962-1979, Paul Savard; 1980-1982, Lucien R. Savard.
3. Alterations and additions: Each section of the 16 sides originally had a pair of 16-section and 15-section windows set over each other to provide light for the interior. In 1946, the eastern side of the shed was pierced by a smaller shed. A fire on November 2, 1968 burned a 16-sided cupola surmounting the structure. The cupola had six-paned windows in alternating sections. At an unknown date a truck entry was added on the northwest side.

- B. Historical Context: Still serving the original purpose for which it was built, this granite-cutting shed was built in 1889 by E.L. Smith. Smith had been employed in various aspects of the granite business in Vermont since the late 1860s. This was his second cutting shed, although the first was built on a different site. On this site, Smith also built a structure to house an office and drafting room. That building was remodelled into an apartment in 1972.

The Smith Company was involved in all aspects of quarrying operations, plus sculpting, cutting, polishing, and merchandising the stone. While specializing in large stones for vaults and monuments, Smith also provided stone for buildings all over the country. A rotary travelling derrick, the only one of its kind in the city, was employed to help handle the heavy loads.

The E.L. Smith Company was one of many firms in Barre engaged in granite-related undertakings. Originally settled in the 18th century, Barre was incorporated as a village in 1886. The population in 1890, shortly after this cutting shed was constructed, was 6700, an increase of 4700 from the 1880 census. This rapid growth was unprecedented in the history of the state. Continued growth in the first quarter of the 20th century displayed great ethnic diversity. Skilled immigrant stone cutters from Scotland, Italy, Spain, French Canada, and other countries joined the work force of native-born quarry men. The ethnic diversity contributed to a rise in Socialist political influence. Unionization attempts followed, and ultimately a bitter strike in 1922. The manufacturers were the final winners, resulting in the end of the union's hard-won closed shop policies. The "American plan," an open shop favored by granite shed management, subsequently became the pattern.

No other examples of round cutting sheds are known, nor is it known why Smith chose this unusual shape. However, he was known to be an innovator so he may have been experimenting with maximizing usable floor space. Certainly, he was the first to quarry stone in the winter, the first to use a battery system for quarry blasting; the first to use a steam drill (1883), and the first to use compound air for drilling.

The current occupant, Savard Granite Company, specializes in the production of granite memorials.

PART I. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: The E.L. Smith shed is the only known example of a round granite-cutting shed, and is the oldest continuously-used granite memorial manufacturing plant in Barre. The shape of the shed renders the interior radial travelling crane a useful innovation.
- B. Description of Exterior:
 - 1. Over-all dimensions: The shed is 70' in diameter, and 38'6" in height.
 - 2. Foundation: concrete, approximately 1'6" high.
 - 3. Walls: 20' in height; sheathed in clapboards.
 - 4. Framing: timber.
 - 5. Chimney: brick, 1'5" x 1'5".
 - 6. Windows: 2'10 1/2" x 3'10 1/2"; each pane is 9 1/2" x 13 1/2".
 - 7. Rcof: The 16 sections vary in width from 11'6" to 14'4".
 - a. Shape, covering: conical, metal.
 - b. Cupola: burned in 1968.

- C. Site: The building was originally surrounded by other granite processing facilities but today is set among maintenance sheds belonging to other firms.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Bibliography:

City Directories, Aldrich Library, Barre, Vermont.

Deed records, Town Hall, Barre, Vermont.

Smith, E.L. & Company Structure Documentations, Sixth Industrial Archeology Institute sponsored by the University of Vermont Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, Summer, 1982.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The 16-sided granite-cutting shed was selected for field recording by the University of Vermont's Industrial Archeology Institute held July 21-22, 1982. The purpose of the exercise was to determine if the structure was eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and to record the building for the Historic American Engineering Record. Project directors were Eric DeLony, Institute Director and Principal Architect, HAER, and Robert M. Vogel, Curator, Division of Mechanical and Civil Engineering, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Edited and transmitted by: Holly K. Chamberlain
HAER
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